(b) the details of amount of loss suffered by each bank, bank-wise;

(c) number of bank officers and employees found involved in this regard; and

(d) the details of their names, bank-wise and action taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Review of disinvestment policy

2843. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in October, 2004, Government had informed the Supreme Court that it was reviewing the disinvestment policy pursued by the NDA regime; and

(b) if so, whether the present decision of disinvesting shares of BHEL is in conformity with the submissions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) A Special Leave Petition filed by Jessop & Co. Staff Association in the Supreme Court was listed for hearing on 11.10.2004. Along with this SLP, two Transfer Petitions filed by the Union of India and three other Writ Petitions relating to disinvestment matters were listed for hearing before the same Bench. The issues before the Supreme Court were important policy related issues regarding disinvestment and the Government had, at that stage, not finalized details of the policy. The Attorney-General appeared on behalf of the Union of India. In view of the importance of these matters, the Court decided that this should be heard by a larger Bench.

(b) The current policy of the Government envisages that the existing Navratna companies will be retained in the Public Sector and profit making companies will not be generally privatised. The Government may, ensuring that it retains atleast 51% of the equity and the management control of the Public Sector Enterprise (PSE), sell minority shares either in conjunction with the proposal of the concerned PSEs to raise funds from the market or otherwise. BHEL is a profit making listed company. No specific decision in regard to BHEL has been taken.

Agricultural loans in Tamil Nadu

2844. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of agricultural loans being provided by the various nationalised banks in Tamil Nadu during the last two years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government propose to introduce new schemes to increase the amount of agricultural loans to the poor sections of the society?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Nationalised banks have provided agricultural loans amounting to Rs. 4076.30 crore and 2625.18 crore in the State of Tamil Nadu during the years 2003-04 and 2004-05 (upto September, 2004) respectively.

(c) The Government announced a special farm credit/package on 18th June, 2004 to double the flow of credit to agriculture in the next three years. In order to increase agricultural loans to poor sections of the society, the following measures have been taken by the Government:-

- Banks have been advised to bring in atleast 100 new farmers per rural and semi urban branch under bank credit;
- A target of bringing in nearly a lakh of tenant farmers/oral lessees and share croppers within the banking fold has been kept;
- Banks have been advised to review all cases of small and marginal farmers where credit has been denied on the sole ground that a loan account was settled through compromise or write offs as per the Reserve Bank of India directive; and
- Banks have also been advised to advance loans to farmers who face acute distress because of heavy burden of debt from non-institutional lenders and to provide them relief from indebtedness against appropriate collateral or group security.

Merger of private banks with nationalised banks

2845. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal is before Government to merge many small private banks with nationalised banks;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.